



# AMONG Friends

Friends & Co

Fall 2022

Celebrating Five Decades Serving Older Adults in Minnesota



Bonnie Esposito in 2022

## Minneapolis Chapter Founder Recalls Intense Early Days

Bonnie and Frank narrowed down the locations to Milwaukee and Minneapolis. "The demographics for Minneapolis/St. Paul were perfect, and being further away allowed us a bit more independence."

Bonnie and Frank made the move to Minneapolis in March 1972, where they rented a house in the Seward neighborhood that served as the epicenter of the new organization.

They learned quickly about the rivalry between the Twin Cities

where residents would rarely cross the river for programming.

"Coming from a big city like Chicago, we just considered Minneapolis & St. Paul as one city. So it was a bit of a rude awakening to be met with that kind of resistance," Bonnie said.

In those early days, a grassroots, door-to-door effort was the only way to find isolated and poor older adults.

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Minneapolis Tribune Clipping August 20, 1972

In the early 1970s, Lilo and Michel Salmon-Legagneur, founders of the first Little Brothers of the Poor Chapter in America, in the heart of Chicago, were looking for an executive director to lead the next expansion site outside of the Windy City. They found their leader in a young Bonnie Esposito, a hard-working Little Brothers assistant who had been managing a case load of 60 older adults in North Chicago for three years.

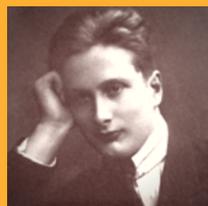
Bonnie was excited by opportunity to live and work in a new expansion city alongside her High School sweetheart and then husband Frank Esposito. Frank shared Bonnie's passion for helping older adults and volunteered with the Chicago chapter.



Staff Photo by Richard Olsenius

On another visit, Mrs. Esposito watched Mrs. Olson open a box of groceries.

INSIDE



Visionary Founder Armand Marquiset & his commitment to older adults

Friends & Co



Design Excellence Friends & Co logo & branding win coveted design award

# Little Brothers Founder Armand Marquiset Envisioned Spreading "Little Fires of Love"



Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly was founded in France in 1946 by Frenchman Armand Marquiset as les petits frères des Pauvres (Little Brothers of the Poor) based in Paris.

The concept behind Little Brothers started to take shape in Armand Marquiset's mind as he longed for an organization that would encompass all of his charitable activities. In Paris on July 7, 1939, while at prayer in Notre Dame Cathedral, Marquiset had a mystical vision that gave birth to

the Little Brothers: "I saw Little Brothers," he said, "spreading across the earth, igniting little fires of love."

But the outbreak of World War II caused him to set these plans aside in the interest of more pressing needs. In 1939 he started Servir (To Serve) through which he relocated the

He began alone, working out of a rented apartment in a poor section of Paris, visiting the elderly poor. He brought sumptuous meals and flowers, which expressed his affection and love for them. He summed up his mission with the motto, *flowers before bread*, which reminds us that help for the needy must be animated by love.

***"The greatest poverty is the poverty of love"***

**Armand Marquiset**

children of active soldiers to rural areas. In Lyon he assisted refugees from Alsace Lorraine through Secours national and organized the provision and distribution of food with the help of Lyon-Charitable.

At World War II's end, Marquiset returned to the idea of Little Brothers. However, after observing and hearing about post-war conditions in Paris, he decided to focus the effort on elderly people. For Marquiset, the spiritual needs of these older adults, left alone and isolated by the war, were even greater than their material need. He decided to help these needy people, calling them his "friends."

Marquiset's powerful example of love and service soon attracted many followers, both volunteers and donors. The Little Brothers began to offer beautiful Christmas celebrations, acquired palatial estates where they offered vacations for their elderly friends, and in time founded various branches of the organization within and outside of France.



## Little Brothers' History Continues to Guide the Work of Friends & Co

**James Falvey,  
Executive Director**

As we mark our organization's founding some 50 years ago, I'm struck by the extraordinary effort and dedication that was required to bring the Little Brothers' Minneapolis chapter to fruition. Founders Bonnie and Frank Esposito worked tirelessly to realize Armand Marquiset's vision and sparking "little fires of love" throughout the Twin Cities in 1972 and beyond.

Although our community has changed quite a bit over the past five decades, this organization holds steadfast to the original core belief summed up in Marquiset's motto "Flowers Before Bread." While bread feeds the body, flowers feed the soul by nourishing human dignity.

While the technology of today, the social networks, and our digital devices can give the illusion that we are all connected, social isolation is actually a bigger problem today, than it was 50 years ago. And Friends & Co is committed to meeting older adults right where they are with the warm promise of friendship and kindness... and the nourishment of human dignity.

For the next 12 months, in each of our Among Friends quarterly newsletters, we will highlight other pieces of the Little Brothers' history. I hope that readers find these glimpses of our past interesting and assuring that the spirit of Little Brothers remains at the core of who we are, and how we serve older adults every day.

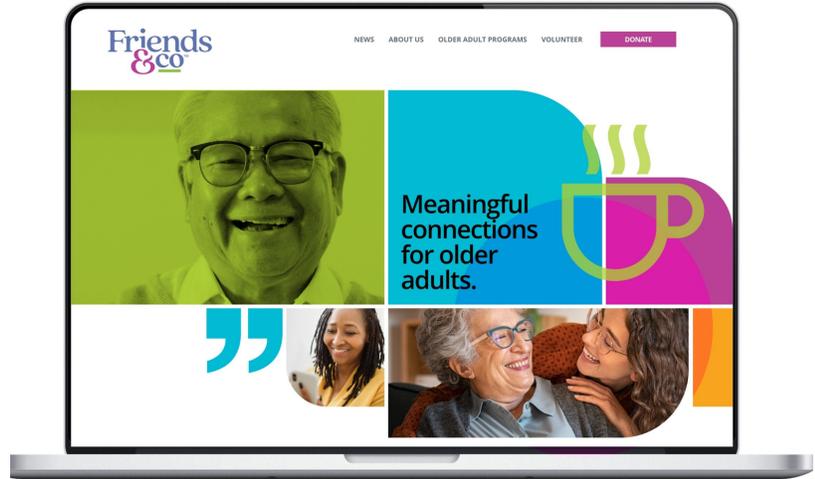
Thank you!

# Designers of Friends & Co Logo & Brand Identity Win Coveted GDUSA Award for Graphic Design

Minneapolis-based branding agency, Franke+Fiorella, announced that its work for Friends & Co is being recognized as one of the “most effective and engaging graphic communications of the year” in Graphic Design USA’s 2022 American Graphic Design Awards competition. Chosen from less than 10 percent of 10,000+ entries, it is part of a select group of work being celebrated.

“It’s always an honor to be recognized by our peers,” said creative director Craig Franke. “While winning awards is never an objective of our design briefs; we (and our clients) enjoy the accolades when they come our way!”

“We are so pleased with our new logo and branding,” said James Falvey. “And we’re thrilled that Franke+Fiorella is receiving this well-deserved honor”



## Bonnie Esposito from page one



Staff Photo by Donald Black

### Champagne dinner for elderly

Frank Esposito, head of the area Little Brothers of the Poor, poured some champagne Monday for John Alquist, 1022 E. 21st St. The organization held a Christmas dinner for about 150 elderly at the Incarnation Catholic Church, 3755 Pleasant Av. S. The menu included rum punch, lobster tail mayonnaise, turkey and pomme Mouseline. Little Brothers is an organization that seeks to provide the elderly poor with little luxuries and attention they usually would not get.

Minneapolis Tribune Clipping August 20, 1972

“Here we were these young people going into these neighborhoods, knocking on doors and finding older folks who needed our help.” Soon there were speaking opportunities at Catholic church services, including Incarnation Church and St. Joan of Arc in Minneapolis, resulting in more referrals.

Bonnie and Frank wanted to do things differently than the social work profession dictated. “In social work you must establish boundaries, you can’t get involved,” Bonnie said. “But with Little Brothers it was the opposite, and that’s what we wanted. We always brought flowers and a bag of groceries on our monthly visits.”

Bonnie and Frank started one of the first home-delivered meal programs, making meals out of their kitchen. They realized they couldn’t get up to scale to meet

the need, so Bonnie partnered with Lutheran Deaconess Hospital in the Phillips Neighborhood. “I would fill out the forms for lunch every day for lunch and they would make them up and we would deliver them to our people.”

In Minneapolis, Bonnie and Frank continued many programs that proved popular at the Chicago chapter, including birthday celebrations and holiday dinners. By the Summer of 1972, Little Brothers Minneapolis had 15 volunteers, and served 50 elders in Minneapolis and St Paul.

“After 50 years, it’s amazing to think that the organization still exists, and people are being helped and visited,” Bonnie said.

Thank you Bonnie and Frank for creating such an incredible foundation from which this organization continues to be inspired.

# AMONG Friends

Friends & Co, formerly Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly, is a nonprofit volunteer-based organization committed to alleviating social isolation among older adults through community-led service that fosters meaningful connections for everyone. We envision a world where every older adult thrives in meaningful relationships.

To learn more about Friends & Co's programs, staff, board of directors, volunteer opportunities, or to make a donation, visit:

If you have questions about this publication, or to be removed from our mailing list, contact Mike Weiner at 612-746-0739 or [mweiner@friendsco.org](mailto:mweiner@friendsco.org)



## Do You Enjoy Talking on the Phone? Volunteer with Us!

### **Be a Coffee Talker**

If you love chatting on the phone, and the idea of connecting with a variety of older adults inspires you, join our Coffee Talk team! Sign up for a weekly four-hour shift to offer words of encouragement, a listening ear, and great conversation. Calls will be routed directly to your phone and can be answered from wherever you and your phone happen to be. Great training and support are provided. Contact Emma Lucchesi @ 612-746-0746 or [elucchesi@friendsco.org](mailto:elucchesi@friendsco.org)

### **Be a Phone Companion**

If you are a talker and connecting one-to-one with an older adult for ongoing meaningful phone friendship appeals to you, let us pair you with someone through Phone Companions. You can be the warm, caring voice at the end of the line that ensures one older adult knows someone cares. Build a rich and rewarding connection, one call at a time. Contact Ann Fosco @ 612-746-0725 or [afosco@friendsco.org](mailto:afosco@friendsco.org)